428 the father's property. The egalitarian spirit of the Bedouin
596 inheritance rule functions to maintain the unity of the family, and, at another level of social complexity, the structural continuity of the corporate group. Ideally, the surviving sons will keep intact their father's estate, his land and animals, and will work it as a unit. And this is generally
596 the case in al-Qasr. On the other hand, there is also the
• 594 implicit assumption in the structural principle of the
* 613 Bedouin segmentary lineage system that each individual will
183 eventually establish a unit of his own, separate from but interrelated with, the main household. As a result, there
596 usually develops some division of property and labor among
593 surviving brothers. Whether or not this division is formally agreed upon, and, whether or not it is assigned by the father or the eldest son is largely arbitrary. In some cases, the father makes such a decision before his death and prepares his sons for it. The father's concern is that good relations be maintained between his sons after his death. Just as the father mediates conflict between his sons during his life, so he hopes to maintain peace between them after his death. The Bedouins say that a father should be fair when dealing with his sons, and that he should never favor one over the other.

428 Inheritance is determined through the patrilineal
* [613] lineage principle. The Bedouins of al-Qasr claim that they

*613 Bedouins, always a minority in Egypt, have been undergoing
178 a transition to peasantry since about 1800. Probably since
177
578 that time, Bedouin society has been, to use Easton's (1959) emphasis, a "segmentary society" rather than a "segmenting society."

196 Formal Bedouin categories of kinship are confusing; depending upon the situation they use the concepts of bait, 'ait, 'aiela and qabiila interchangeably. The term bait literally means "house," the term bait al-'Arab may mean "the tent" or "the people of the tent." "People of the tent" • [594] may refer to either the nuclear family of one man, or the nuclear families of a man, his brothers and his sons, and [596] their spouses and offspring. In the latter case, the ex- [621] tended family is referred to as the naja'. A naja', or camp, usually consists of three or four tents. The word bait may 196 refer to the tertiary and the sub-tertiary groups, and oc- *613 casionally one might even refer to the secondary group as a bait when he wishes to emphasize the quality of corporateness. The term 'aiela, literally "family," is the word used most often to designate the secondary lineage segment. The diminutive of this word, i.e. 'ait, usually refers to the sub-tertiary group but it commonly designates the secondary group [619] also. The term qabiila, "tribe," is the only word used for the primary and supra-primary lineage groupings. These are 196 the general Bedouin usages and their frequency will vary not

613 individuals. He settles disputes among them and represents them in their
[627] disputes with outsiders. He is also the spokesman of his Bait in all matters involving the relationship of the Bait with the other tribal seg-
[682] ments. He is responsible for the collection of the bloodmoney from members of his Bait and has the authority to confiscate property of individual members who refuse to pay their share. When a member is financially unable to pay his share, the Aqila is expected to pay for him and collect at a later time when the member is in a position to make such payment.

613 Originally the position of the Aqila was a hereditary one with the
428 position passing from father to son. However, in recent years the rigid-
178 ity of the patrilineal descent as the basis of succession to the position of the Aqila has been modified radically and other principles of selec-
613 tion have been introduced. The working of the principles underlying the
128 selection of the Aqila will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter through the close examination of one of the major legal cases which occurred during my stay in the area.

613 Thus each Bait is a division of one of the Eilas and this has its
[423] place in the formal tribal system. It constitutes a group with definite usufruct rights to land and a formally recognized leadership.

621 But the actual residential units in which Awlad Ali live are not
[613] baits but parts of them in the form of separate camps or "nagei". The camps constitute the primary communities of Awlad Ali. A camp consists
[594] of a number of tents ranging from four to twelve. Each tent is usually occupied by one nuclear family of a husband, his wife and children. In
[595] cases of polygynous marriages, each wife usually occupies one tent with
[361] her children. Each camp is separated from the next one by a distance which ranges from two to ten kilometers.

6: Peters E-5 (1948-1950) 1965 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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sorts of petty ways, listen to his grumbles about his agnates, interfere on his behalf in petty camp quarrels, shield him from the disciplinarian father and guard his property interests against the predatory father's brother; if the mother's brother dies without heirs, the sister's son can reasonably expect at least a share of his wealth. When the mother's brother is a member of a different corporate group, a sister's son cannot possibly expect to inherit from him in any circumstance.

The mother's brother may reside in a camp too distant to be much effective direct help in day-to-day living. His relative remoteness gives the relationship other possible opportunities, however. Rainfall in the semi-desert area of Cyrenaica is highly variable, both from year to year, and from place to place in any given year. As a result this shallow saucer of a depression may have sufficient rain to supply both the water needs of animals and crops, while an area a few miles distant will have inadequate water supplies for either. The mother's brother-sister's son link can mean water for animals and a crop of barley for both when, in successive years, the resources of one area or the other are inadequate.

The differences in the relations between men and their mother's brother do not end with a characterisation of their antipodal forms. The demographic structure of a group may be such that one man may have a number of mother's brothers, another only one; one man may have to share with several brothers, another may be an only son. Complications of this sort determine the precise relationships between men, but however intricate these may be, each corporate group has its matrilateral links with a group occupying a slightly different ecological area, and it also has a plurality of matrilateral connections within it. Further, if a direct connection is not available to any particular individual he can use an indirect link (e.g. father's mother's brother or mother's mother's brother) to satisfy his needs.

The Preference for Males

Thus far, the family and the social matrix in which it is embedded has been discussed in general terms, most particularly in reference to several selected sets of relationships. I wish now to place these relationships in a more specific setting with a brief discussion of the composition of a small camp of a group inhabiting the arid areas of central Cyrenaica. When the Bedouin give their views on the structure of the family in Cyrenaica they speak of it as consisting of a pair of spouses and about ten children, mainly males. The emphasis on males is not mere sentiment, overwhelmingly though it favours them against females. Additional males in a family increase the productive possibilities of a family in the sense that more herdsmen become available and larger ploughing commitments can be undertaken; an increase in the number of females has small effect on production since they are precluded from any direct participation in these activities. Both sexes, ranging in age from about seven years to mature adulthood, are necessary if a family

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829 is to constitute a viable economic unit; and if it is to expand, the number
• 594 of males must be increased disproportionately compared with females. Since
562 the structure of this "ideal family" (which in the sentiments of the Bedouin
858 is the only family) is based on the division of labour, some details of the tasks and their allocation among members of a family are included to estimate the importance of this notional "ideal family."

The Division of Labour, by Sex

462 The tasks women perform are almost entirely associated with the tent.
286 They make the tent top, and the gaily coloured carpets which cover the sandy ground in the men's quarters. They also weave the material for making sacks, and nose bags for horses and camels. Throughout the year a piece of weaving is always on the loom waiting, and while any women of the tent may take a turn at weaving, the mother decides what is to be made,
462 its pattern and colours and in general directs operations. Women also pitch
342 the tent when the camp is moved; they do so unaided by the men. It is a task which requires considerable strength and only grown girls and mature women can assist in this; younger girls scour the vicinity in search of stones to hold the sides of the tent on the ground after it has been erected.
[356] As soon as pitching is complete, the floor of the tent is brushed clean before carpets are spread and the few articles of personal belongings placed in their proper position.

462 Next, brushwood must be fetched in large quantities for fires. Apart
313 from cooking needs and winter warmth, the fire of each tent is in constant use for preparing the sickly sweet tea, almost the consistency of syrup, which is drunk several times a day regularly and which is made again for even the casual visitor. The task of fetching brushwood is performed daily,
[412] and each load takes a few hours of a woman's time to gather and bring back to the tent. Bushes are uprooted with the aid of a long-handled adze and piled together, to be carried on her back for the homeward journey. The load is cumbersome and heavy; only girls in their late teens and mature women can cope with it.

462 All cooking is done by the women. Most meals consist of cereal dishes of
252 various sorts, so that grinding, using heavy millstones, is a perpetual ac-
412 tivity to satisfy the demands for large quantities of flour. Millstones are bought in the villages. In most small camps there only one or two sets, so they are passed round from one woman to another. The stones are very heavy but when they are carried from tent to tent men offer no assistance.

462 Each tent also requires large quantities of water for human consumption.
312 If the camp is located near a well, water is drawn in small quantities, frequently. Young girls and boys take a donkey to the well, fill a couple of
[492] jerry cans with water, wait for an older sister to load them on the donkey and then drive the beast back to camp. After a fall of rain, while puddles of water remain on the ground, mature women make haste to gather the

6: Peters E-5 (1948-1950) 1965 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
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in position immediately anyone else appears at the entrance to the tent.[11] Women cook, but they do not serve the meal to males, nor are they responsible for the distribution of meat among them. Parts of an animal are carefully specified, and the various portions distributed at a meal carry with them a great deal of significance. A host can honour, flatter, disappoint or even insult his guest, depending on the precise distribution of meat he adopts. Designated portions should go to certain kinsmen if they are present, but this still leaves a wide margin of choice, and a host can use this choice as part of the many means at his disposal for directing his relationships with other men. A political link can be forged or another snapped by the distribution of portions of meat at the commensal meal.

The Bedouin Ideal Type of Family as a Unit of Production

This account of the division of labour is far from inclusive of all the tasks carried out. The details given are only barely sufficient to provide some indication of the necessary composition of a family. Referring again to the Bedouin sentiments about the matter, it is now possible to give it some numerical precision. The number of females should be a minimum of about three, including a mother, a teen-age daughter and a child of about eight years. Males should number about six: a father, relieved of most chores to act as director; a son in his middle to late twenties, to plough; a second son, in his early to middle twenties, to herd the camels; a third, in his late teens to early twenties, to shepherd the sheep; a fourth, middle to late teens, to look after the goats; and a younger son to fetch, carry and run errands about the camp. The family of the ordinary Bedouin, they say, shows this sex and age distribution, although they recognise that a politically ambitious man with the wealth to match his aspirations would require more of both sexes — particularly women, since the burden of entertainment increases rapidly with a man's climb to power and fame.

Clearly, the basis of Bedouin sentiment concerning family structure is its approximation to an ideal production unit. Some families display the features of this ideal, but even they enjoy the productive benefits of this composition for a very limited period only. The family, as described above, can only be an ephemeral unit, since the age structure constantly changes, women are removed by marriage, men move away and death affects it at any point at any time. The Bedouin family is a fiction in the sense that it can be said to have a characteristic composition. The mistake they make is to conceive of it as a particular kinship structure related to production. The substance of what has been referred to as a fiction is that, if viewed as a productive unit, it bears close consistency with reality. Freed of the need to examine it in terms of specifically limited kinship relationships, and no longer anchored to the inhabitants of a single tent, the distribution of people according to sex and

[11] This is the general rule. In practice, the use of the divider can indicate an intimacy or distance in relationships, most subtly.

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age depicted in their notion of a family is meaningful. It follows that, since this unit will not be clustered in one tent, but distributed over several, each small community must be so constituted that links people can use to claim the services of others must exist, and that, since claims can be made against various sorts of kinship relationships, each small camp will have predictable kin links. It follows, further, that since age, sex and number of people are significant, a small camp will have a characteristic demographic structure; each tent in a camp will display developmental changes, and particular tents may be shifted from one camp to another, but if a livelihood is to be gained in this semi-desert environment supporting its mixed pastoral-cum-agricultural economy, then at any given time the small camp must have certain fixed features in its composition. The elementary family is subject to far too many vicissitudes to exist on its own. It now remains to demonstrate this general argument by examining the details of one of these small camps.

A Particular Camp Viewed in Detail

The camp was one of 12 which constitute a minimal tribal section. In genealogical terms its male members were linked through an ancestor five ascending generations from living males of about 20 years of age. Usually, in summer, camps of this sort move to the vicinity of a large watering point; in winter, this larger community breaks up into a number of smaller ones as man and animals move off further south to the pastures. The total living population of the tribal section to which this particular camp belonged was 524.

Linked patrilineally, its male members were also linked in a plurality of other consanguineal ways. Primarily, this plurality was brought about by parallel-cousin marriage. The incidence of this form of marriage for males of this group was 48 per cent[12] of the gross total of 234, derived from their marriages over three generations; that is, the generation of males entering into marriage, and the generation which has begun to die out are included with the generation of middle-aged males. This means that practically every male is related to others in a number of ways, and it is necessary to point this out now because the details to be given presently will show only the more immediate, but not all, existing connections. Plurality of links, moreover, is not the only consequence. Parallel-cousin marriage is a transmuting agent, creating a diversity of links. Each and every link carries with it specific modes of behaviour, which in turn means that each individual has a wide variety of different claims he can press on his co-residents. Marriage connections also exist with other sections of the same tribe. Their proportion is 28 per cent of the total. Demographically, it

[12] As a matter of interest, the figure for marriage to the father's brother's daughter is 50 per cent of the figure for parallel-cousin marriage in general, but the consequences of these are beyond the scope of the present discussion.